



A GUIDE
TO THE
LLOYD BOTANIC GARDEN
DARJEELING

(with eight photographs and a map)


Edited by

J. SEN

Superintendent, Indian Botanic Garden, Calcutta

Superintendent, Government Printing
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The Lloyd Botanic Garden, Darjeeling, carries the memory of Mr. William Lloyd, an old and well known resident of Darjeeling. In 1878 he made over to the Government a beautiful piece of land within the town in an accessible situation and with an excellent aspect. By his munificence the problem of securing a suitable land for starting a botanical garden in the Himalayas, as a branch establishment of the Royal Botanic Garden, Calcutta, keenly felt by late Dr. T. Anderson, the then Superintendent, was solved. The Garden is situated at an elevation of about 6,000 ft. with an average annual rainfall of 110 inches. The indigenous plants in the Garden represent more or less the characteristic flora of the Sikkim Himalayas. The position of the Garden in the heart of the Himalayas is unique and the only one of its kind in the east.

The land was laid out as a delightful botanic garden under the guidance of late Sir George King with its charming terraces and slopes and unusually happy combination of alpine plants, Arum-lilies, Geraniums, free-flowering Compositae, spectacular Azaleas and Rhododendrons and various Conifers. The Garden is situated just below the Eden Sanatorium in an open slope covering an area of about 40 acres, bound by Cart Road and Victoria Road on the north, by Jail Road and Hari Ghose Road on the south, by Eden Sanatorium on the east and Victoria Road on the west. This Garden is one of the main attractions to the visitors to Darjeeling with a treasury of many rare and beautiful plants as well as patches of typical forest of tall *Cryptomeria*, *Bucklandia* and *Alnus* with thick mass of lianes and shrubby undergrowth. It is a favourite spot of recreation with vistas across some of the loveliest slopes, a paradise to the students and research workers in Botany and an eminent institution distributing the plants and seeds and specimens of temperate and sub-temperate Himalayas to different parts of the world.

The Garden is divided into three main sections:

- (i) an upper indigenous containing dominant species of Eastern as well as Western Himalayas and Burma,
- (ii) a middle Coniferous, and
- (iii) a lower exotic containing acclimatized specimens of different countries.

There are more than two thousand species in the Garden, arranged in twenty divisions, representing seventeen countries of the world. While it is not the intention here to compile a lengthy list of plants in the Garden (which has

already appeared in the Rec. Bot. Surv. India, Vol. 5, No. 5, 1940), there is endless variety of form and colour in the evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs in the open. In the Conservatories there are plenty of tender plants to delight the eye. The Rock Garden (Fig. 1), the Conservatories (Figs. 2-4),



Fig. 1: A portion of Sir John Anderson Rock Garden showing Primulas in bloom

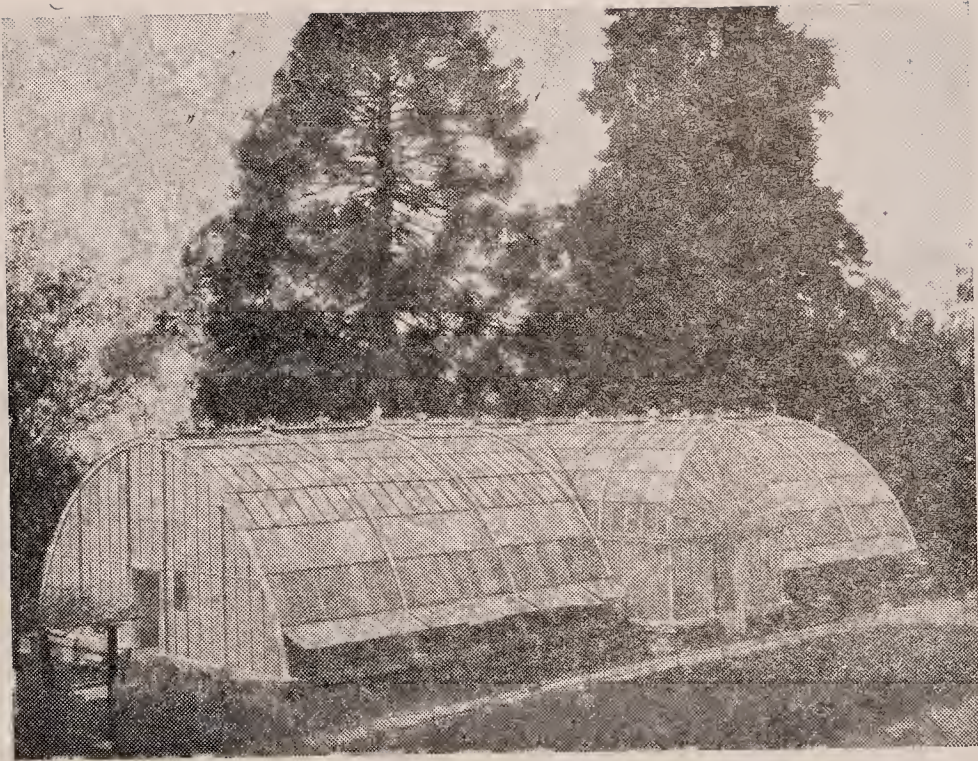


Fig. 2: The Large Conservatory

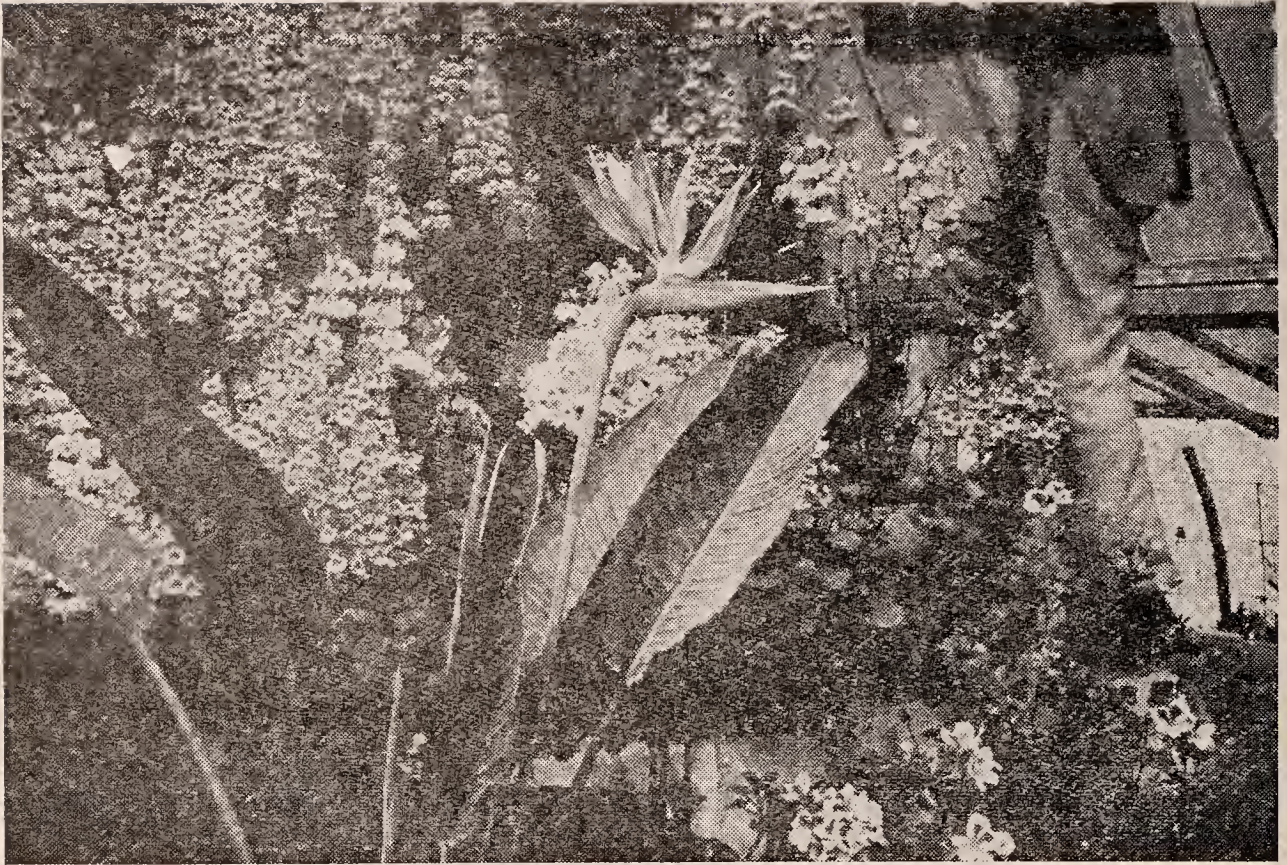


Fig. 3: "*Strelitzia reginae*" (Bird of Paradise) inside the Large Conservatory

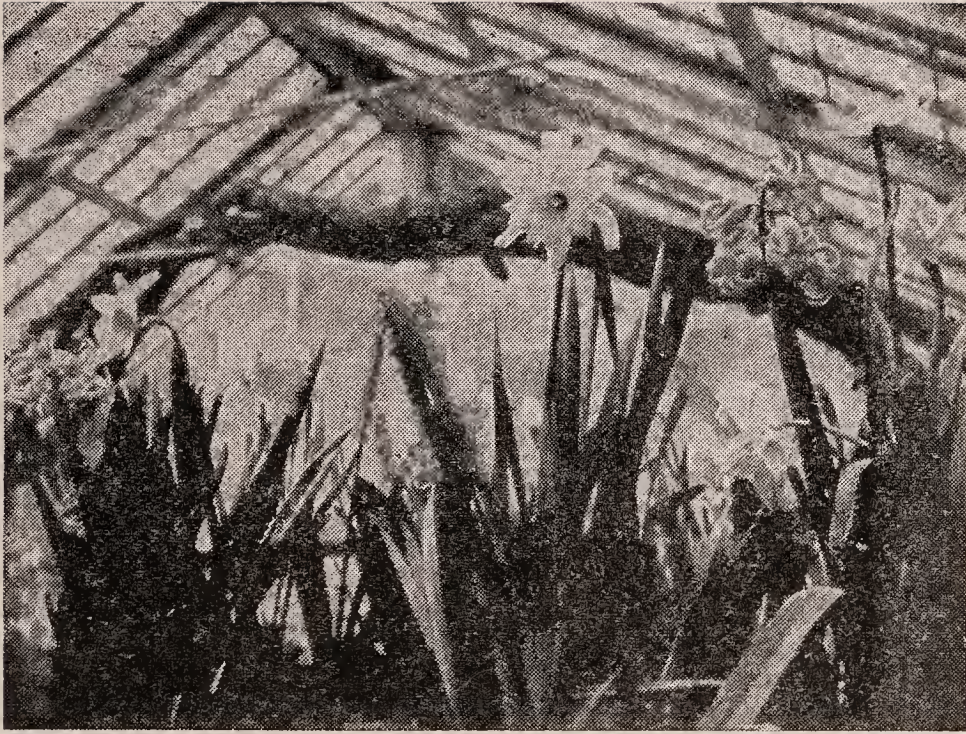


Fig. 4: Daffodils and Hyacinths inside the Small Conservatory

the Orchid House (Fig. 5), the Herbarium, delightful walks, the herbaceous borders, the terrace bedding and the annual beds are some of the most interesting and colourful features of this Garden, which leave an indelible imprint on the mind of the visitors to the Garden.



Fig. 5: Orchids in bloom inside the Orchid House

The approach to the Garden from the Cart Road near the bazar is through a steep road with rocks covered with mosses protruding here and there and rows of mature *Cryptomeria* trees and plantation of ornamental trees. The George King Avenue starting from the main gate is a broad tarred path leading through a series of terraces ends in the Chandmari Gate. Sir John Anderson Rock Garden (Fig. 1) can be reached through Jaffrey Avenue, which is an off-shoot of George King Avenue. Many alpine and sub-alpine plants under conditions akin to those obtaining their natural habitats are grown here. One dwarf and prostrate Conifer of the temperate Himalayas, *Juniperus pseudo-sabina* (Fig. 6) can be seen here on the left side of this Avenue before reaching the Rock Garden.

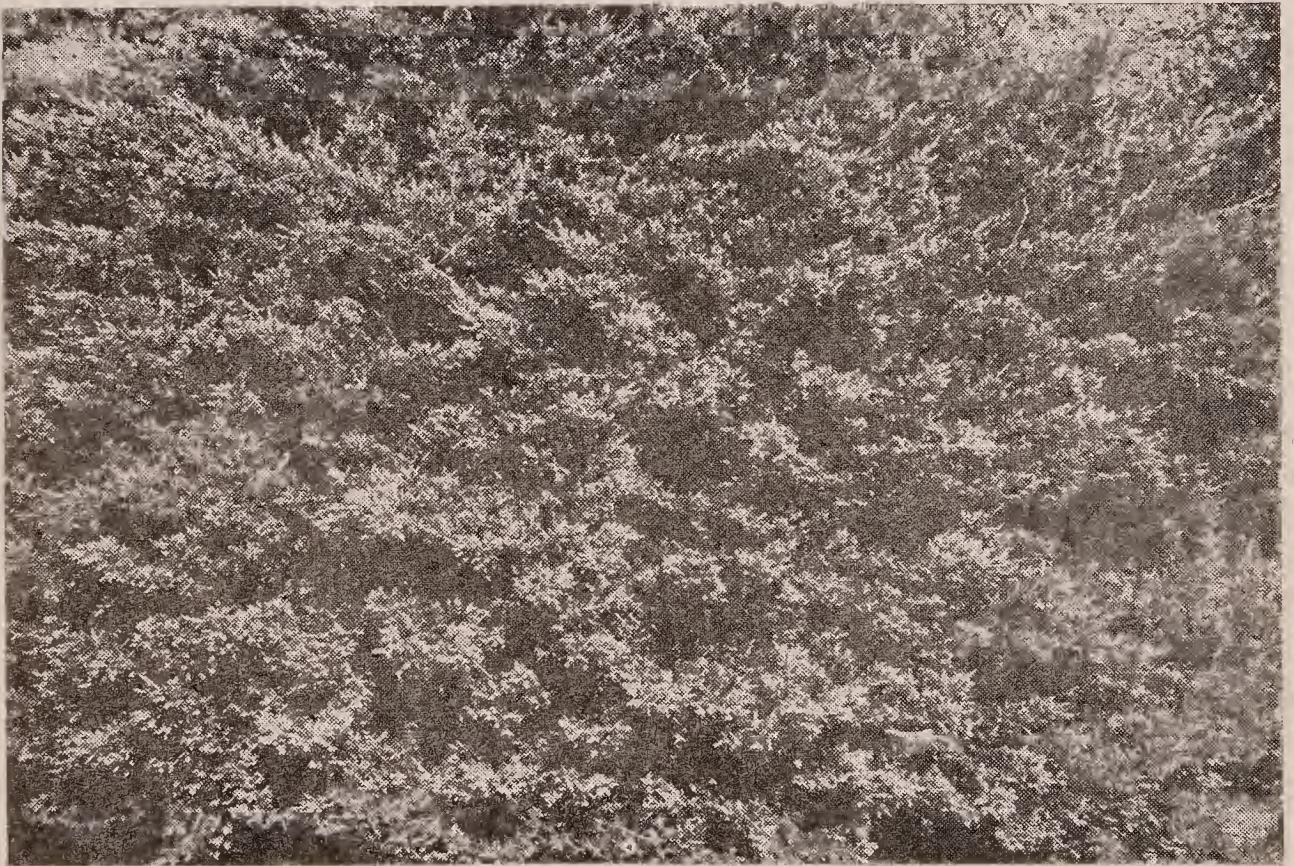


Fig. 6: "*Juniperus pseudo-sabina*", the prostrate dwarf Conifer of the temperate Himalayas

In the Rock Garden one may find a unique combination of the Rhododendrons, Pieris, Lilies and Azaleas with suitable herbaceous plants such as *Cotoneaster macrophylla*, *Meconopsis wallichii*, *Primula floribunda*, *Fragaria vesca*, *Saxifraga sarmentosa* and *Ranunculus diffusus* and *Puya alpestris* with its copper green coloured tall spikes. Moving a few steps ahead the visitor will meet with brilliant Rhododendrons in dense clusters standing on the right hand slopes by the side of the Rock Garden, with flowers of white crimson, pink and mauve coming into blooms in succession in spring time. A little below, there are well-established old trees of the Himalayan cherry (*Prunus cerasoides*). The road circles a small pond. Here there is a highly developed water garden with mass planting of Primulas, *Iris kaempferia*, *Impatiens*, giant-leaved arum-lilies, and with a over-hanging slender weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) standing on a rocky cascade in the centre of the pool.

The visitor will find at the crossing of the Ashley Eden Avenue and Jaffrey Avenue a magnificent *Magnolia campbellii* tree with its pink flowers blooming on leafless branches during the spring. From this place the visitor interested in botanical sciences may visit the Herbarium, which is rich in valuable collections of dried plants. The Herbarium and the office are housed on a stone building in the late Elizabethan style surrounded by hedges of "American Pillar" roses which bloom in May to June. The Herbarium is arranged according to Bentham and Hooker's system of classification. It contains about 30,000 specimens of dried plants, mounted on sheets, covering nearly all the species of the Eastern Himalayas. On proceeding further the laboratory building for carrying out research work is situated with slopes in front covered with annual beds and bushes like *Calliandra*, *Leucosceptrum* and *Daphne*.

Moving further along the same Avenue the visitor may reach the Orchid House. The Orchid House is a spacious glass-house, constructed in modern lines, well stocked with more than 2,000 Orchids belonging to various terrestrial and epiphytic species. The Orchids are very costly flowers and are considered as coveted presents in some countries. The hybrid Cymbidiums, the blue Vandas of Assam, the golden coloured long spikes of Dendrobiums of the Sikkim Himalayas and the spider-Orchids of Malaya flower profusely and in perfect conditions which add to the charm of the garden (Fig. 5). Other plants, which may interest visitors are *Cymbidium lowianum*, *C. mastersii*, *Cypripedium insigne*, *C. villosum*, *Habenaria* sp., etc.

From the Orchid House the visitor may take Calder Avenue for proceeding further downwards. The toilets are situated on the top of Calder Avenue. The most remarkable shrub in the Calder Avenue is the common Himalayan *Mahonia*

acanthifolia with whorls of yellow spikes of flowers and *Philadelphus coronarius* with beautiful white flowers. The Calder Avenue meets the George King Avenue and ends in the Chandmari Gate. The terrace is flanked with Buddleias, Melastomas, Osbeckias and *Jasminum* as well as other plants.

On reaching the Chandmari Gate, the tarred road named as Bruhl Avenue turns westwards and separates the Coniferous section from the upper indigenous section. On the right there is a line of *Syringa chinensis*, *Edgeworthia gardenieri* and other species. The visitor will see the collection of Conifers with more than 45 species. The most remarkable among them is the cone-shaped Australian *Callitris* with evergreen bluish foliage. The majestic Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) with its horizontal spreading branches, Silver fir (*Abies webbiana*) with leaves silvery in the inner margin, *Pinus longifolia* with slender needles and Himalayan spruce (*Picea morinda*) with drooping whorls of leaves are also standing there. Along with these tall trees, there grow wart masses of *Juniperus pseudo-sabina* and small trees of Hemlock (*Tsuga brunoniana*). Leaving behind the elegant Conifers the visitor finds himself at a junction of four roads with a small resting shed and a steep slope. He may turn left and follow the Cave Avenue. On the left stand a large strikingly beautiful Conifer (*Retinospora strandzii*). On the right slope, there stand two specimens of the Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), which grow here fairly well. The plant which promises to be one of the most beautiful Conifer is of immense botanical and geological interest. The genus had long been known only from the fossil record. In 1944 *M. glyptostroboides* was found growing wild in Szechuan Province of China. Thus somewhat like *Ginkgo* and the living Cycads, it is truly a living fossil. Azaleas in all possible colour form the herbaceous border along the right side of the slope. The Cave Avenue ends in the residential area of the Garden staff. The visitor may turn right and may have a view of a long terrace with beautiful and tasteful annual beds and a collection of Fuchsias (bi-colour Dancing Dolls), surrounding another interesting gymnosperm, the maiden-hair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*).

While going inside the Small Conservatory (fernery) the visitor will be interested to see the large trunk of the very old climber, the *Wisteria chinensis*, which has covered the entire periphery of the structure. On the stages inside the house, potted specimens of Pelargoniums, *Streptocarpus*, *Achimenes*, Primulas, ornamental ferns like *Asplenium* and *Adiantum* make a pleasant sight. Crossing the fernery the visitor will reach the Large Conservatory. Beautiful climber like *Solanum wendlandii*, *Clematis montana*, *Solanum jasminoides* and *Passiflora eduli* covering up the pillars add to the attraction. The four big galleries as well as several small galleries well packed with beautiful blooms of Begonias, Gloxinias, Cyclamens, Hydrangeas, Cinerarias, Schizanthuses and other

season flowers make it riotous in resplendent colours. The semi-hardy perennials like *Strelitzia* (Fig. 3), *Streptosolen* also contribute to the colourfulness of the place. The beautifully laid out large ornamental beds of annual flowers with two Conservatories and creepers with majestic grace and beauty of the over-looking Conifers, all these things contribute to make this area a charming spot. During appropriate season, the visitor may see blooming *Magnolia stellata* against the background of *Picea morinda* and other trees (Fig. 7) towards the north of the Large Conservatory.



Fig. 7: "*Magnolia stellata*" in bloom against the background of "*Picea morinda*" and other trees (north of the Large Conservatory)

On the southern side of the Conservatory, a giant specimen of a very interesting tree, the Monkey's Puzzle (*Araucaria bidwillii*) stands majestically matching with the beauty of the surroundings. On proceeding north by Anderson Avenue visitor will be interested to see the tree tulip (*Liriodendron elatus*) on the left and the collection of both indigenous and exotic Oaks (*Quercus* spp.) on the terrace a little ahead. The sunken garden is situated in the left along with beautiful specimens of Camellia. Another tree with a long past, "Bhurjapatra" (*Betula utilis*), which peels of white sheets of bark, stands on left side of the walk.

On proceeding further towards north, the tree ferns standing in clumps on the right slopes will fascinate the visitor. *Cyathea spinulosa* (Fig. 8) is the prettiest of all the ferns with black fronds. If one turns right and climbs along Gage Avenue with rows of Himalayan palms (*Trachycarpus martianus*) and



Fig. 8: "*Cyathea spinulosa*" (Tree ferns) on the slope

hedges of Acubas and Hydrangeas on two sides, he will reach the junction of Bruhl Avenue and Cave Avenue where he will be interested to see the chinara of Kashmir (*Platanus orientalis*) with white bark. Now he may turn left and see the hedges of common tea (*Cammellia sinensis*) pruned to dwarf its height. Behind the hedges, down the slope stand specimens of Camphor tree (*Cinnamomum camphora*) and large flowering white Magnolia (*Magnolia campbellii*). Going ahead, he will see the terrace of lily beds with tall slender spikes of *Agapanthus*, *Kniphofia*, *Yunkia*, Daffodil and others. If he is tired with the uphill and downhill paths of the Garden, he may climb up along Cave Avenue with rows of *Cupressus* and *Thuja* on the left, and soon reach the main gate.

As an alternative he may move up Leslie Avenue lying towards north with *Rhododendron* and *Magnolia* groups on the two sides and will soon reach the Student's Garden. Here the families representing the Eastern Himalayan flora

have been planted in a systematic way to cater to the needs of undergraduates. He may now turn left and follow the south-west path, Griffith Avenue, watching the tall trees on the terraces on both the sides and will soon reach the Anderson Avenue. Now, the visitor should turn right and follow the Prain Avenue when he will come across rows of Japanese cherry (*Prunus serrulata*) with beds of annual and roses breaking the monotony of the green moss covered lawns. There stand a group of Rosaceous plants and a rose bower which will draw much interest from the students. Proceeding further downwards along William Smith Avenue and Prantling Avenue, he will soon reach the Victoria Road Gate of the Garden, the lowermost point. Collection of Canna and hedges of *Salvia pratensis* are the most salient feature of this region. Now turning left and proceeding through Jagadish Bose Avenue, the tall rows of *Cryptomeria japonica* (which was introduced from Japan and was acclimatized in this Garden) down the slope with natural forest-like undergrowth, one may soon reach the bamboo collection. A beautiful lawn with annual flower bed, a resting shed, a lily pond are the salient features of this terrace. Proceeding a little eastwards the visitor may turn right along Joseph Hooker Avenue to see the Japanese Maple collection which stands on rows on both sides of the Avenue. The Avenue now turns left and Gents' toilets are situated at this point. The terrace intercepted by Wallich Avenue and Joseph Hooker Avenue contains collection of mixed exotic deciduous trees and shrubs. The Ladies' toilets are situated at the junction of Joseph Hooker Avenue and Wallich Avenue behind the bamboo hedges.

On proceeding further east, Kennedy Avenue is reached and one can take this Avenue and cross the Jhora to reach the Nursery where all the plants are nourished and other horticultural operations are carried out. A Hot House with hot chambers are provided in the Nursery to save the delicate plants from the hazards of severe winter. Near the Jhora, clumps of *Amomum dealbatum* can be seen. Otherwise, the visitor may turn left and approach the rosary and a collection of *Eucalyptus*. An interesting Conifer, *Cunninghamia chinensis* stands at the centre of the rosary. One may take the Avenue towards east with avenues of Mulberry and reach the Conservatories for going out of the Garden.

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